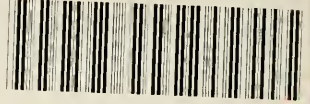


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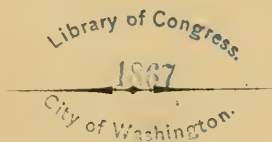


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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH
OF
THE LATE, LAMENTED,
GEN. ROBERT HATTON,
BY
ROLFE S. SAUNDERS,

"He Was My Friend."

PRINTED FOR THE AUTHOR.



[As published in the Appendix to the "Life of Gen. Robert Hatton," by J. V. DRAKE.
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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH
OF THE LATE
GENERAL ROBERT HATTON,
BY ROLFE S. SAUNDERS,

"Brief, brave, and gallant, was his young career!"

AMID the countless number of brave and gallant spirits who fell in the gigantic struggle through which we have so recently passed—a contest that startled the civilized world, shocked humanity, convulsed the nation, and filled the land with mourning and desolation and ruin,—but few, indeed, caused a deeper thrill of anguish and regret to flow through the whole vast extent of his acquaintance and friends, than the death of the gifted, gallant, and lamented Gen. ROBERT HATTON.* This sad event cast a gloom over his native and loved Tennessee,—and throughout the wide expanse of his acquaintance elsewhere,—which caused a spontaneous wail of sorrow to flow from thousands of hearts who loved him as a man, and had watched, with an abiding interest, the rapid advancements he had made in the pathway to honor and distinction.

Now that the strife is over, and the issues forever set at rest by the arbitrament of the sword, and the result acquiesced in by all the good and true men of the country, no one can justly

* The subject of this sketch, was the early companion and bosom friend of one of the Editors of *The Commercial*, who, whilst he offers this humble tribute to his memory, believes it will be as acceptable to the public as it is gratifying to him in offering it, only regretting the tribute is not more worthy of the subject.—EDITORS *COMMERCIAL*.

look with disfavor upon an humble tribute to the noble worth—to the lofty qualities of mind and heart, of Robert Hatton; for, of him, truly may it be said,

“None knew him but to love him,
Nor named him but to praise.”

Like nearly all of the public men of this country, who have made their impress upon the times, Robert Hatton was born of humble parentage. His father was a Methodist preacher—a man of strong, good sense, high character as a minister, and of eminent usefulness in the church; but like most men of that calling, he was in humble circumstances in life, and consequently, his son had to battle his way through the world. And thus with most men who rise to distinction, was developed that self-reliance, nervous energy and dauntless intrepidity of purpose, which, in after life, distinguished him. By close application to study, and untiring energy, he made himself a thorough scholar, for one of his years, teaching school at intervals, to procure the necessary means, and after graduating with the first honors at Cumberland University, was, for several sessions, Tutor in that institution. He then entered the Law Department of the same University, founded by that great legal mind of the South, Hon. Ab. Caruthers, and graduated, again bearing off the first honors; after which he located permanently in Lebanon, and chose it as the field in which to try his fortunes in the legal profession. The bar at this place, at that time, was composed of some of the first lawyers in the country. Robert L. Caruthers, who enjoyed a national reputation as a statesman and a jurist, and whose splendid talent and genius, and great moral worth, shone with undiminished luster in the council halls of the nation, in the palmy days of the Republic, and adorned the Supreme Bench of Tennessee, when the judiciary of our State commanded the first order of ability, was then at the head of the bar with a full practice. Judge John S. Brien, Hon. Jordan Stokes, Hon. William L. Martin, Judge

Jo. C. Guild, Hon. Charles Ready, and Col. John K. Howard—bright galaxy in the legal sky of Tennessee—were all practicing at the same bar. But nothing daunted, young Hatton launched his untried bark in this sea of strife, where he would have to encounter the first legal talent in the State, and braved that theatre of action for success. Young as he was, and adverse as were the circumstances against which, as a poor, unknown youth, he had to contend, his ability, diligence and attainments, soon obtained for him an extensive practice; and within a few brief years, in a large circuit of counties in which he attended court, he was engaged on one side of nearly every important case. Nothing short of merit, both moral and intellectual, of a high order, could have won this brilliant and almost unparalleled success. The older lawyers of the bar, all respected and esteemed him, while the young members, his compeers, cherished for him the sincerest affection and regard.

Early in life, General Hatton took a deep interest in political affairs, and engaged actively in the discussions of the day. He was a Whig of the Henry Clay school, and was a most devoted follower, of that illustrious statesman. He took him for a model, and in a number of respects, possessed many of his characteristics. He had the happy faculty Mr. Clay possessed to such an eminent degree, of binding men around him who clung to him with an affection which no disaster could thwart or circumstance change.

In 1852, he was a sub-Elector for his Congressional District, on the Scott-Graham ticket, and made considerable character as a public speaker.

In 1855, he was elected to the Legislature from Wilson county, by the largest majority ever given in that county for any man, for that position. In the Legislature, though one of the youngest members, and in a body remarkable for the men of ability who composed it, he took a stand in the front ranks,

and was regarded as one of the most prominent, influential, and useful members. At the organization of the House of Representatives, his name was presented by his friends and against his remonstrance, as a candidate for Speaker; and in the caucus, was only defeated a few votes, by Gov. Neill S. Brown.

In 1856, he was unanimously nominated as Elector on the Fillmore-Donelson ticket, for his district, and made a most vigorous, able, and successful canvass, it being the only district in the State where the strength of the party was maintained. To his efforts in that great contest, was this result chiefly attributable. He was an ardent admirer of Mr. Fillmore and a warm personal friend of Major Donelson, and he entered the contest with an energy, zeal, and determination, bent on success; and had the same canvass been made in the other portions of the State, the probability is, Mr. Fillmore would have received a decided majority.

In 1857, he was nominated unanimously, by a State Convention of his party, as a candidate for Governor. The party were largely in the minority at the time, and he was defeated. He was only a little past thirty-one years old, when he received this nomination—an honor never conferred in this State, upon any man, of that age, except in the single instance of the lamented James C. Jones. General Hatton made a thorough canvass of the State, and achieved the reputation of a well informed politician, a quick and ready debater, and a most courteous and eloquent speaker. He surpassed the expectation of his friends, and by his bold, eloquent and manly speeches, won the respect and admiration of his political opponents.

In 1859, he was unanimously nominated for Congress, against Hon. Charles Ready, who had been elected and re-elected by overwhelming majorities. In that canvass, General Hatton displayed such masterly ability and energy, and inspired his friends with such enthusiasm, that he was elected by near *two thousand majority*! It was, probably, the best contested race

that had taken place in the district since the memorable canvass between John Bell, with Felix Grundy, and Robert M. Burton. It was one of the greatest political victories ever won in a State memorable for its party conflicts; and it was such a contest as would necessarily mark the victor as a man of no inconsiderable merit or ordinary capacity.

In Congress, he took a high position for a young member; as an evidence of which he was placed by a Speaker opposed to him in politics, in the very important position of Chairman, of the Committee on Naval Affairs. He made a most useful and active member, looking vigilantly, after the interests of his constituents, and zealous and watchful of the cause of the Constitution and the Union, which were ever near and dear to his heart.

In the patriotic efforts of the union members to bring about an amicable adjustment of the sectional and political differences that were dividing and distracting the country, he acted a prominent and influential part. Resolutely, nobly and gallantly, to the very last hour of that turbulent session, did he, with President Johnson, then in the Senate, Crittenden, Douglass, Etheridge, Nelson, and others, struggle to effect this great consummation, and give peace to the nation, stability to the Constitution, and perpetuity to the Union.

The speech delivered by him in Congress during that session, abounded in the strongest appeals to the better judgment and nature of men, and in withering reproach of the actors and measures which he believed dangerous to the best interests of the common country. At the close of this session he returned home, and addressed his constituents, who were eager to listen to his counsels and advice in that dark hour of our country's gloom. It was about the last union speech made in his district, preceding the breaking out of the war. He dearly loved the Union, and gloried in the extent, progress, power, and majesty of the American nation; and he inspired his constitu-

ents with the same patriotic sentiment and wish that sectionalism might be crushed, our national troubles averted, and the Union, in all of its parts, preserved unimpaired, forever. He was among the last of the union men in the border States, to give up the hope that the strife of sections and conflict of factions, would pass away, civil war be averted, and the country saved. With resolution, and all the power and energy he possessed, did he steadfastly oppose every measure and movement looking to a divided country; with a hopeful heart and eloquent voice, did he labor and plead for a policy that would avert the horrors and devastations of civil war, and preserve peace. He had never been a sectional man. No man abhorred sectionalism more than he did. No man loved the Union of our fathers with purer or truer devotion; but when this struggle came—when the first blow was struck, he believed it severed the Union forever; and in his opinion, honestly entertained, however mistaken in judgment, he was,—he believed, the best and only hope of the South, and the whole country, was, to select a choice of the evils presented, and separate with as little difficulty as possible, and become two great nations instead of risk the chances of an annihilated and ruined country, rent with feuds—distracted and divided into petty governments, of which Mexico furnishes the mournful example. He believed, with Senator Douglas, that "*war was disunion*," and after it had once been commenced,—however much he deprecated the state of affairs,—he did not believe the Union could survive the contest and the American people ever become reconciled to live together again in peace and unity. He looked at the facts as he believed them to exist—not as he would have them; and, however great his mistake, as subsequent events have developed, his opinions were honestly entertained; and carrying them out, he was actuated by the highest impulses of patriotism and principle. And in entertaining this opinion, he was not alone; for many of the ablest statesmen in the North and South, whose love and

devotion to the Union were not to be questioned, believed as he did; and at that early hour of the great struggle could not see a ray of hope to light up the impenetrable gloom that hung as a pall of destruction over our beloved country. But when the great conflict came; when his predictions seemed to fail; his hopes appear blasted; and the country was "precipitated" by the demons of sectionalism, and the eternal enemies of liberty, law and order, into the bloody whirlpool of civil strife, he joined his fortunes with his people of the South, and raised one of the finest regiments in either service.

By close attention to military tactics, he soon made himself an efficient officer, and brought his command to excellent discipline. He was soon called with his command to Virginia, where they passed through some of the most eventful scenes of the war, and endured hardships and privations of the most fearful character. It was, during these scenes and trials, that Gen. Hatton gained the deep love which his men cherished for him. He forgot his own personal comfort and safety in promoting theirs. For his intrepid valor, he was promoted, on the field of battle, to a Brigadier General's command; but they lost him long before their trials and troubles were over. At the ever-memorable and hard-fought battle of Seven Pines, May 31st, 1862, he was killed instantly, by a shell, while gallantly leading such a charge as would have added luster to the fame of Marshal Ney. A distinguished officer was present and witnessed the scene, and pronounced him "*the bravest man he had ever seen in battle.*" Thus fell, in the prime of life and full vigor of glorious manhood, one of the foremost young men of the nation, mourned and lamented and honored, as few of his age have been, in this, or in any other age, or country.

Few public men in this country rose so rapidly to positions of honor and distinction, and few, indeed, had so bright a prospect in the future. He had set his mark high, and with a brave, stout heart, and noble resolve, which no obstacle could thwart,

or misfortune dampen, he was rapidly working up to the goal of his ambition; and had he lived, the great contest, in which he had given all his energies of mind and soul, would doubtless have furnished the theatre where history would have crowned him among the brightest heroes of the great struggle; and the future annals of the country, have been radiant with his splendid achievements in the council halls of the nation. His noble character, his kind and generous heart, his open, frank and manly nature,

“—— a soul of courage all compact,”

made him a favorite wherever known, and bound around him troops of friends who loved him with an affection and remembrance, never to be diminished or forgotten.

Brave, gallant, generous, noble Robert Hatton! Thy pure spirit hath departed from the walks of men, and been wafted on high to the bosom of thy God; but the tender and endearing recollection of thee, will remain fresh and green forever, and thy name will live and be cherished,

“When marble moulders, and when records fail!”



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